

REVISED WORKWEEK STUDY

The four-day workweek has caught on with the public in its mood to embrace anything that is innovative and anything that provides more leisure. Within the past year the number of companies incorporating the idea has risen from 36 to 367 as of September 1971. The prime purpose of the change is to increase profits. This is done by increased production which is accomplished largely through improved employee satisfaction.

Most problems associated with the shorter week occur during the transition phase, but are rapidly corrected because employee "cooperation in implementing corrective action is astonishing." Predominant employee interest in industry, as well as in ORD, is in "trading off a longer workday for a longer weekend."

Fatigue is not a problem for most of the workers for several reasons. These reasons are as follows:

1. "...the new workday is not much longer than before, while the total hours in the work-week is now somewhat reduced."

2. "...morale is now higher."

3. "...the weekend is now 50% longer." A medical association committee study stated that

"...the five-day week fails to provide a relaxing weekend and people need longer vacations....In a [two-day] weekend people don't get the relaxation they need. The rush to use the leisure hours produces a stress situation like the rest of the week." Consequently, the authors conclude that "...the four-day workweek's longer weekend more than makes up for whatever additional fatigue, if any, that may result from its usually longer workday."*

As in most organizations where a study is conducted, the response in ORD has been overwhelmingly in favor of trying the shortened 40-hour week. Most everyone realizes that there will be problems which must be worked out at the office and adjustments to be made at home. However, actual participation in reduced workweek schedules have shown that because of the personal motivation and involvement, employees solve these problems rapidly and efficiently.

The criterion of 80% staffing was suggested as unnecessarily high and it was requested that this be "reexamined." The necessity of meetings away from ORD, travel, sickness, vacations, etc., probably reduce the current staff coverage to less than 80% now, it was stated. Since we now accommodate to travel, leave, etc., it should be no more difficult under slightly altered rules.

Considerations against change are as follows:

- a. Some people generally don't like change.
- b. The system would be confusing to administer.
- c. It would cause clock-watching.
- d. Leads to formalized communications.
- e. Stretches out the decision process.
- f. Some people don't have the stamina for longer hours.
- g. Parents have less time with school-age children.
- h. Create problems with working wives.

Considerations in favor of the change are as follows:

- a. Increases productivity.
- b. Improves employee morale.
- c. Decreases absenteeism.
- d. Decreases employee turnover.
- e. Reduces new personnel processing (lower re-train costs).
- f. Improves mental health since off-duty events do impact on duty performance.
- g. Reduces worker costs (lunch, gas, etc.).
- h. Improves efficiency because of stabilized workforce.

- i. Reduces commuting time.
- j. Provides periods for concentration and undisturbed attention to tasks.
- k. Office start-up and close-down time reduced.
- l. Momentum in some types of work could be maintained better.
- m. Increases leisure time.

There has been considerable study applied to implementation of the four-day 40-hour system and much follow-up on its success and progress. Even the National Association of Manufacturers is working on programs for implementation. (This is the organization that in 1929 predicted that the five-day week would never catch on.)

The system has caught on because it has been shown to provide advantages to both the employer and employee. Consultants advise that one should not feel that all employees have to be on the four-day basis, and that it should not be dismissed as being "foreign to your type of business."